

**Strike the Last Word – Ways and Means
Markup 10.22.19
H.R. 3398**

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

I am proud to be a cosponsor of H.R. 3398.

The bill builds on a successful initiative, which began through the Affordable Care Act, to create ladders of opportunity in health professions for historically underserved communities.

In my district in Western New York, the Buffalo and Erie County Workforce Investment Board has been a successful health professions opportunity grantee since the program's inception.

Our program in Buffalo has resulted in more than 1,500 individuals completing training, with over 1,200 entering employment in the health professions. Starting yearly wages for graduates averages almost \$31,000. The coalition works with

more than 150 employers in Western New York to place those who have completed their training. This program is a win-win for everyone.

Take, for example, the story of Michelle, a graduate of the Buffalo program. Michelle was a stay-at-home mother of six children who suddenly found herself having to raise her children alone. In order to provide for her family, Michelle entered the Registered Nursing program at Trocaire College, and thanks to the health professions opportunity program, was able to receive help with transportation, child care, and even the cost of her books.

Now, Michelle was not only able to graduate and become a Registered Nurse, she found a full-time position as an RN at Lakeshore Hospital. Today, Michelle works at Buffalo General Hospital and makes almost \$67,000 a year.

As Michelle's story illustrates, opportunity programs like this don't just help individuals, they help

families. They help communities. And I am pleased to see that not only does H.R. 3398 reauthorize HPOGs, but it expands them in ways that will allow even more individuals, families, and communities to benefit.

My bill, the Opioid Treatment Providers Act, is part of H.R. 3398, and expands the definition of who is eligible for these grants to include opioid treatment providers.

We need to make sure that health care providers are adequately trained in addiction medicine and addiction counseling, and that there are enough providers and support staff to respond to this crisis. H.R. 3398 ensures that opioid treatment providers can participate in the creation of a pipeline of health care professionals to help treat substance use disorder via the health professions opportunity program.

Thank you, and I yield back.